

Christian Candour and Unanimity
stated, illustrated and urged.

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IN A
S E R M O N
PREACHED AT A
M E E T I N G
O F
M I N I S T E R S
A T

CREATON in *Northamptonshire*,
January 12, 1749-50.

By P. DODDRIDGE, D.D.

Published at the united and earnest Request of
the MINISTERS that heard it.

L O N D O N :

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CHURCH OF THE
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To the Right Honourable the COUNTESS
of HUNTINGDON;
that eminent Example of the
CHRISTIAN CANDOUR
here recommended,
and of every other Virtue and Grace,
which can inspire, support, and adorn it ;
the AUTHOR,
finding himself (after repeated Attempts)
incapable of writing any Dedication,
under the Restraints which her Humility
amidst its utmost Indulgence
has prescribed him ;
or to mention any Excellence which would not seem an Encomium *on her*;
has chosen thus most respectfully
to inscribe this Discourse :
intreating that his farther Silence,
in this Connection,
may be interpreted by her LADYSHIP,
and by every READER,
as the most sensible and painful Proof
he can give of the Deference
Veneration and grateful Affection
with which he is, her LADYSHIP'S
most obliged and obedient humble Servant,

P. DODDRIDGE.

To the Right Honorable the Governor
of HUNTINGTON

and his Council

their petitioners

and of every other person who may
be interested in the same

sheweth that your petitioners
are the subjects of the King of Great Britain
and are entitled to the same
rights and privileges as the other
subjects of the King of Great Britain

and your petitioners are entitled
to the same rights and privileges as the other
subjects of the King of Great Britain

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P. DODDINGTON



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stated, illustrated and urged, &c.

PHIL. ii. 1, 2.

*If there be therefore any Consolation
in Christ, if any Comfort of Love,
if any Fellowship of the Spirit,
if any Bowels and Mercies ; fulfil
ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded,
having the same Love, being of
one Accord, of one Mind.*



F it indeed be, as it certainly
is, a Test of true Eloquence
that it is suited to strike pow-
erfully upon the Minds of all,
however different in Genius
Education or Rank, I cannot
but conclude that every one here present,
must already acknowledge these Words to be

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a remarkable Specimen of it, even before we proceed particularly to illustrate them, and, having felt something of their pleasing Energy while we have been reading them, is ready to confess that the Sentiment they contain is finely conceived, and pathetically expressed. But ill shall we answer the great Design of the Apostle if we rest in the meer Acknowledgment of this. His Views were much more worthy of him whose Minister he was: He laboured to diffuse, through the Breasts of his fellow Christians, that Spirit of Love, which was in his own, as a constant Spring of Living Water. And what more convincing Proof can be given of the deplorable Disorder of Men's Minds, than that such Addresses, proceeding from such a Man; yea, I will add, the yet more forcible Address of his divine Master, and ours, should have produced so little Effect: That such Discord and Animosity should so early, so long, I had almost said so universally prevail in the Christian Church, amidst all the Incentives, amidst all the Intreaties, amidst all the tender Adjurations, as well as the Godlike Examples which the Sacred Oracles exhibit to charm us into the most endeared Affection. But alas these Incentives, and Intreaties, these Adjurations, and Examples are overlooked, as not having Lustre enough to detain our Attention: For we too generally seem to study our Bibles (if we study them at all)

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for Amusement or Ostentation, rather than practical Instruction. We fix on some curious Incident or high Speculation, and are first ingenious to explain it where it cannot be explained, and then impassioned to defend it, as if it were fundamental Truth, till we beat out the Sacred Gold so thin, that every Breath of Air carries it away: Whilst the plain Things which tend to inspire an heavenly Temper, and lead us on to the most exalted Goodness, are slightly passed over; as too obvious, and too vulgar, to engage our Attention or excite our Emulation. Thus we feed our Pride by what was intended to humble it, and make that the Prize of mutual Contention, which was designed to be the Band of Love.

What wise Man has not observed this? What good Man has not lamented it? Yet alas who so wise as in all Instances to have avoided it? Who so good as to have exerted himself to the utmost to cure it? A cordial however feeble Attempt of this kind will now be made, and so powerful are the Arguments so alluring the Motives suggested in the Text, that if the Spirit of Wisdom and of Love so often, and I trust so sincerely invoked, may guide our Meditations upon them, we may cheerfully hope for some valuable Effects.

And happy will it indeed be, if he may teach us to enter into these Words, with a Temper like that which the holy Apostle

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St. Paul felt, when in his Bonds for the sake of the Gospel, and particularly for his Zeal in asserting the Calling and the Liberty of the Gentiles to whom he wrote; he addressed them with this tender and pathetick Intreaty. *If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy; that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.* It may be here proper to enquire

- I. To what the Apostle is endeavouring to persuade the *Philippians*.
- II. To consider in how tender a Manner he addresses them, and what a variety of affecting Arguments he pleads with them, and then
- III. To conclude with some Advices for maintaining and cultivating the Temper he so pathetically recommends.

I attempt it, my reverend and dear Brethren, with the greater Chearfulness, as from long Experience I am persuaded, that all your Hearts are one with mine, in every Effort to spread Christian Love, and as that uninterrupted Peace, and unalienated Affection, which has so long reigned among ourselves will not only dispose you to receive what I shall say with unprejudiced Minds; but will render it as agreeable to you, as it is in general

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ral needful to the Christian World. Long have we beheld, and blessed be God long have we felt, *how good and how pleasant a Thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unity* (a); long has the Odour of this precious Ointment filled our little Tabernacles with its Perfume. May the Dew descend on all the Mountains of Sion, and the Lord more abundantly command the Blessing, even Life for evermore! That Life of which fervent Christian Love is the Earnest, the Foretaste, the Beginning!

I. WE are to enquire to what it is, that the Apostle endeavours so affectionately to persuade the *Philippians*. And here I might observe, It is in the general *to fulfil his Joy*, and more particularly to do it by cultivating Unanimity, and Love.

I. HE urges them in the general *to fulfil his Joy*, that is, to conduct themselves in such a manner as might cause him greatly to rejoice. This was in the general to be done by remembering their Christian Character, and *walking worthy of it*, or as he expresses it a few Verses below, *by working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling* (b), and by keeping themselves *blameless and harmless* (c), and acting as the *Children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation*, that so they might *shine as Lights*

(a) Psal. cxxxiii. 1. (b) Phil. ii. 12. (c) ver. 15.

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Lights in the World, and hold forth with Advantage the Word of Life. Paul, like the beloved Disciple St. John, had no greater Pleasure than to see his Children walking in the Truth (d), and therefore elsewhere says, *we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord* (e).

Now before we proceed to what is more peculiar to our Subject, let us pause for a few Moments on this edifying, this animating Consideration. Let us as it were in our devout Meditations, pay a Visit to this illustrious Confessor in his Chains at *Rome*, for he was now a Prisoner there, that we may learn how his Mind was employed in the midst of his Confinement, his Straits, and his Sorrows — To enquire what would have afforded him the most sensible Joy, so far as others could be Instruments of affording it? Not that his Eloquence should be admired, or his Necessities relieved, or his Liberty restored, or his Patience and Magnanimity applauded, but that his Christian Converts might behave in Character; that the Honour of their Profession, and their own Happiness might be most effectually secured. *Only let your Conversation be as becomes the Gospel* (f), and then *if Bonds and Imprisonments await me, yea, if I be offered upon the Sacrifice and Service of your Faith, I joy and rejoice with you all* (g); and *I call upon you also*

(d) 3 John ver. 4. (e) 1 Theff. iii. 8. (f) Phil. i. 27. (g) Phil. ii. 17.

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also to congratulate me: For none of these things move me neither count I (in a Cause like this) even my Life dear unto me (h). But it is evident that whatever may be comprehended in fulfilling the Apostle's Joy, the Phrase has a peculiar Reference to the Method he prescribes, wherein they might effect it, which we are next to consider.

2. HE urges them to do it, by cultivating Upanimity and Love.

As we render the second Verse, this must be the Sense of the whole: *Be like-minded, having the same Love, of one Accord, of one Mind.* Admitting for the present this Version, which I think may be considerably improved, common Sense will not allow us to understand it as an Exhortation, to be all entirely of the same Opinion in every religious Sentiment about which they might exercise their Enquiries. For considering the Diversity of Men's Capacities, and Opportunities of Improvement, that is absolutely impossible. Had Paul condescended to enter into the minutest Detail of Doctrines and Principles that can be imagined, had his Form of Words been as artificial and elaborate, as that of any Scholastick Divine, and his Decrees as large as those of the most voluminous Councils, and Synods of succeeding Ages; yet still, while the Apprehensions and Understandings of Men had continued

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of a different Size, different Interpretations might have been put upon his Words, even by good and honest, much more by designing and prevaricating Men; when Interest on the one Hand and Resentment on the other, had given an Edge to their Invention. Least of all could such an Unanimity as we are now speaking of, be effected by mere Intreaties: And it is very observable, we here meet with no Arguments or Decisions, by which one Doctrine is established rather than another, about which there could be any supposed Difference, or one speculative Sentiment or disputed Practice pointed out, in which they are so earnestly exhorted to agree: Not now to insist upon it, that where there was such a perfect Uniformity, a peaceful Disposition would have been Matter of very little Praise, and might seem only Self-love diversified and reflected.

WE are necessitated therefore, by the Absurdity of such an Interpretation, especially in this Connexion, to seek out for another: And we shall more easily attain it in its greatest Perspicuity, by a little varying our Version of the original Words. *ἵνα το αὐτὸ φρονεῖτε τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγαπᾶτε ἑχούσης, that ye may be unanimous, maintaining the same Love συμπύχου το ἐν φρονεῖσας having your Souls joined together in attending to the one Thing.* On this Interpretation, it will be as if he had said “be
“ unanimous in affection, if you cannot be
“ so

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“ in Opinion, agree on cultivating the same
“ Love, however your Judgments, yea, and
“ in some Instances your Practices may be
“ divided. And that you may be so ce-
“ mented, let all the Ardor of your Souls
“ be combined in attending more and more
“ to the *one great Thing*, which ought to be
“ the leading Concern of every Christian,
“ the Advancement of vital, practical Ho-
“ linefs:” This might well be understood,
though it was not particularly expreffed and
described, it being fo obvious to all that
knew any thing of the Gospel, that it was
the great Design in which it centered; and
having been spoken of by our Lord, in a
very celebrated Oracle, under the Title of
the one Thing needful (i).

AND in this View we may confider the
Apostle as addressing himself, not only to his
Friends at *Philippi*, but to all Christians of
every Nation and Age: And thus supported
by his Authority, I may address you, my
Brethren, that hear me this Day, whether in
the Ministry or in private Life.

To agree in our Sentiments as to every
Point of Doctrine or Discipline, or as to the
Authority, or Expediency of every Rite of
Worship that may be in Question, is abso-
lutely impossible. The best of Men differ,
their Understandings differ, various Associa-
tions have been accidentally formed, and dif-
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(i) Luke x. 42.

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ferent Principles have been innocently, and perhaps devoutly, admitted, which, even in a Course of just and sensible Reasoning, must necessarily lead to different Conclusions. Accordingly we find that in this Age, enlightened as it is (and so far as the Aids of Literature can go, I am persuaded no Age was ever more enlightened) the wisest and the best of Men at home and abroad have pleaded the Cause on either side of various Questions, which to both have seemed important, without being able to produce Conviction. The Event of many a voluminous Controversy has been this; that Men of contrary Parties have sat down more attached to their own Opinions than they were at the beginning, and much more estranged in their Affections: The Champions something sore with the rough Usage they have mutually received in the Combat, and the Partizans of each so heinously displeased, at the Obstinacy of their Brethren, in refusing to yield to such unanswerable Arguments, that they can hardly now condescend to own them for Brethren. And when this is the case, what is further to be done? The Laws of human Nature, the Laws of Christ, will not permit of force on either Side; and blessed be God the Laws of our Country forbid it too, which if they did not, I much fear that neither the Voice of Nature or Scripture would be heard by many. Since then after all that has been said,

or

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or that can be said, we must live together, let us, by every consideration of Prudence and of Tenderneſs, be entreated to live not only in Peace but in Love, in a free inter-
course of all the good Offices in our Power, as well as with a ſtrict Care not to injure and afflict each other by unkind Treatment, or Cenſures unneceſſarily harſh. Truth is indeed too ſacred a Thing ever to be denied on any Conſideration; and ſo far as we are in our own Conſciences perſuaded that any particular Truth is important, neither Honour nor Charity will allow us to give it up, as a Point of mere indifferent Speculation. Let us therefore ever be ready, when properly called out to the Service, to plead its Cauſe in the Name of the God of Truth; but let it be in a Manner worthy of him, a Manner which may not offend him as the God of Love. And let us be greatly upon our Guard that we do not condemn our Brethren, as having forfeited all Title to the Name of Chriſtians, becauſe their Creeds or Confeſſions of Faith do not come up to the Standard of our own. Yea if it were in a Matter which ſeemed of ſo great Importance as to give us ſome room to ſuſpect that the Miſtake were fatal, (which ſurely nothing can be that does not greatly affect Men's Temper and Conduct towards God, and each other) even that Conſideration ſhould engage us to Gentleneſs and Tenderneſs, rather than Severity to
C 2 them;

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them; if peradventure our friendly and respectful Carriage may gain such a happy Ascendant over their Minds, as to remove their Prejudices against our Reasons: For the Reasons in such important Matters must surely be so forcible that nothing but very strong Prejudices could obstruct their Efficacy; Prejudices too, which on our own Principles, we may endanger their Souls by encreasing,

BUT where we and our Brethren agree in attending to *the one Thing* which Christianity was designed to teach us; surely an Agreement in that should unite our Minds, more than any Difference, consistent with that Agreement, should divide them. To reverence with filial Duty and Love, the God of Heaven, and to adore him with Integrity of Heart; to honour Jesus his Son, as his brightest Image, subscribing to the Truth of all he is known to have revealed, and the Authority of all he is apprehended to command; conscientiously to abstain from every known Evil, and to practise, so far as human Infirmary will permit, the comprehensive Precepts of *living soberly, righteously, and godly; still looking for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal Life*, assuredly expecting a future Judgment, and an eternal World, carefully endeavouring to prepare for both, by setting the Affections on those great Objects, which the Gospel opens to our View; and finally being habitually ready to sacrifice

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sacrifice Life and all its Enjoyments, to that blessed Hope ;—— this, this, my Brethren, is the essential Character of every Christian, and where we see this, should we esteem it a difficult Thing to live peaceably with him in whom we discern it? Should we arrogate it to ourselves as any high Praise, that we do not censure, that we do not grieve, that we do not injure him, because he follows not us? Is this the Man to be hated or suspected, I will add, can we refuse to esteem and embrace him, merely because he worships in another Assembly, or according to a different Form, because he expresses his Apprehensions about some of these Doctrines in different Words, because he cannot see all that we think we discern in some Passages of Scripture, or because he imagines he sees something which we discern not? Is it after all so great a Matter, to love a Character, which, amidst all its Imperfections, is in the general so justly amiable? Nay, instead of thinking much of any Acts of Kindness, which it is in our Power to perform for such a Fellow-Disciple, Ought we not rather to lament that we can do no more for his Service? Ought we not to endeavour rather to supply in our fervent Prayers to God the Lack of that further Service, which Christian Benevolence dictates, but which the narrow Limits of our Condition and our Nature will not allow us to perform?

METHINKS

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METHINKS the Matter might safely be rested here, and that the very Description of Christian Charity, and its proper Objects, might engage every Heart to cultivate it. Nor is it easy to expatiate beyond the just Boundary of such an Argument. But I should be inexcusable, if while I have this Text before me, I should deprive you of the Pleasure which every benevolent Mind must undoubtedly feel, in contemplating, what we are to consider,

II. IN how tender a Manner the Apostle addresses himself to these Christians, and conjures them to cultivate the Temper he had been recommending. And no Words but his own will so properly represent this. He pleads *the Consolation of Christ, the Comfort of Love, the Fellowship of the Spirit, the Bowels of Mercy*. Considerations, which if I can but illustrate, there will be little occasion to enforce them by any Arguments of my own.

I. HE pleads with them *the Consolation of Christ*.

THIS most strongly implies, that many Important Consolations arise from him, and that they will all properly regarded conspire in disposing us to mutual Love.

THAT numberless Consolations do indeed flow to the true Believer from the *Lord Jesus Christ*,

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Christ, is too obvious to need being proved at large. Yet, O how delightful would it be, to attempt a little to illustrate the Point if my Time would permit! How delightful to speak of the genuine and strong Consolation to be derived from the Offices he bears—from the Benefits he imparts—and from the Figures under which he is represented in Scripture!

How delightful would it be to me to speak, and to you to hear of this faithful and infallible Prophet, who brings us so compleat a Revelation of the Divine Will, in so plain and so condescending a Manner! Of this great *Higb-Priest*, *holy, harmless, undefiled* (k), who made his own Life our Sacrifice, who is now, in Virtue of it, interceding in our Favour before the Throne of God, and lives for ever to attend this friendly important Office! Of our most gracious Sovereign, who rules with consummate Wisdom and proportionable Goodness; and is ever ready to exert the Power with which he is invested at the right-hand of God, to defend us from every Evil, and to make us more than Conquerors (l) over his Enemies and our own! Of that kind Surety who has undertaken our Cause, and paid off our dreadful Debt, that he might rescue us from that Prison from whence there is no Redemption: Of that compassionate Shepherd, who ha-

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(k) Heb. vii. 26.

(l) Rom. viii. 37.

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ving generously given *his Life for the Sheep* (m), folds the weakest of the Flock in his gracious Arms, and carries the Lambs in his Bosom (n)!

AND where should I bound my Discourse, if I were to speak of those Consolations, which flow from the *Benefits* that Christ bestows! From the Pardon he proclaims, the compleat Pardon of the most aggravated Sins! From the Peace which he restores to our troubled Consciences! From the Cures he performs on the diseased Powers of our Natures! From the Strength he diffuses through the infebled Soul! From the Joys which his chearing Spirit gives, and the delightful Prospect which his Gospel opens; which it opens not merely with Respect to the happy Spirit, when it has shaken off this Burthen of Flesh and Blood, and springs to its blessed Associates in the intermediate State; but especially after the Resurrection; when inhabiting a glorious, a spiritual, a vigorous, an incorruptible Body *fashioned after the Model of his blessed Redeemer* (o), the compleat Man shall be forever with the Lord!

THESE Views, Sirs, will justify all the liveliest and most beautiful Figures, under which so glorious and adorable a Saviour is described in Scripture: As *the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the Vallies, as the Bread of Life*

(m) John x. 11.
(o) Phil. iii. 21.

(n) Isaiah xl. 11.

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Life that comes down from Heaven; as the true Vine; as the Pearl of great Price; as the cleansing Fountain; as the shady Rock; as the Morning Star; as the Sun of Righteousness. Nay, must I not add, these Views will teach us as it were to call for a new Creation, to open upon us; to call for something fairer than Roses and Lillies, richer than Pearls, sweeter than Manna, more generous than the richest Productions of the Vine, more refreshing than Shades, or Streams, yea brighter than Stars, or the Sun itself, to set forth the Glory of *Jesus*, and describe the Consolations which flow to our Souls from him.

BUT you recollect to what Purpose these Consolations are here mentioned; that by them we might be entreated to mutual Love. And, O how forcible is the Conclusion! The Consciousness of Happiness sweetens and exalts the Soul, it makes it capable of nobler and more generous Sentiments, especially when Happiness, like this of ours, is conferred on those that were once the Children of Misery; and conferred, not by Merit, but by rich compassionate Bounty, by overflowing Grace and Mercy. That must be a mean and stubborn Soul indeed which is not melted with such Goodness, and which is not full of a Desire to impart what it has so freely received.

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ESPECIALLY may these Consolations operate here, when we consider those who are recommended to our benevolent Affections, as sharing in them with ourselves. Where, the full Communication to all leaving no Room for Envy, the Thoughts of being Joint-proprietors must naturally be a Source of Love: For every one who is admitted to a Share in these Blessings, is honoured and adorned by them: is not only exhibited to us as the Object of our Redeemer's Love, which surely should greatly recommend him to ours, but is made lovely in Consequence of it, and that with this further important and endearing Circumstance, that he is destined by our glorious Master to dwell with us and with him in a World of final and everlasting Felicity. Let our Souls enter into the attractive Thought. However we now be divided; if we are indeed the Members of Christ, one Temple shall at length contain us, one Anthem shall at length unite our Voices, one Object of supreme Love for ever fill, and by filling, cement our Heart. Such Consolations have we in Christ, such are the Engagements in Love which result from them! uniting to display what we are secondly to consider

2. *THE Comfort of Love*, which the Apostle urges as a distinct Argument. And certainly there is great Comfort in it, Comfort too great and too sweet to be displayed
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in one single Branch of a Discourse, and which I rather wish you may all learn by Experience than by Report, which at best must be very imperfect. But it is most obvious these Comforts are powerful and divine. Love not only guards the Mind from the furious and diabolical Passions of Rage, Envy, Malice and Revenge, which tear it like a Whirlwind, which corrode it like a Cancer, which consume it like *Rottenness in the Bones*, but fills it with a thousand gentle and pleasing Sensations. Love distils a fragrant Balm into the Soul, that while it heals the Wound which contrary Passions have made, diffuses a most grateful and reviving Perfume, most justly compared, in the Passage I referred to above, *to the Ointment poured on Aaron's Head*, or the refreshing *Dew descending on Hermon and Sion* (p), and making all the Country between them to share in its copious Blessings.

Who can enjoy himself even in the greatest Plenty, while his Heart is full of unkind Passions to any, especially to his Brethren? Who could rest in a Palace amidst such Disturbers, far more intolerable than the Swarms of Flies that invested *Pharaoh's gilded Roof*, or the *Frogs that came up to the very Chambers of the King* (q)? But a benevolent and generous Heart will make the plainest Accommodations delightful, and as

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| (p) Ps. cxxxiii. 2, 3. (q) Exod. viii. 24.—3.

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Solomon, who was so exquisitely acquainted with human Nature, testifies, will render a *Dinner of Herbs where love is, better than a stalled Ox and Hatred* Rancour and Malice with it (r). Hatred has Torment, more sensible than Fear: Torment sufficient to turn Heaven itself into Hell, as it in a manner did, before those wretched Spirits, who first entertained it, were, by God's righteous Judgment driven out from thence. But Love, joined with that fervent Devotion which so well agrees with it, and indeed is inspired by it, will turn the meanest and most incommodious Dwelling on Earth into a Paradise, yea into the delightful Anticipations of Heaven itself. And therefore has a gracious God, though his own Felicity is perfectly independent on the greatest Height of our Love, or the most total Deficiency of it, required us to love himself, and to love one another, that we might continually feel the noblest Pleasure, a Pleasure like that which he feels in the Consciousness of his own most perfect Goodness, and in the Survey of his Creatures as made happy by it: And I hope I offend not in adding, a Pleasure which, as our Natures are constituted, Omnipotence itself could not communicate to us in any other Vehicle but that of Love. But we must not forget the third Topic of Argument which the Apostle pleads.

3. THE

(r) Prov. xv. 17.

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3. THE Fellowship of the Spirit. Now it is implied as the Foundation of this Argument, that all Christians do indeed partake of one Spirit. As the Apostle expresses it, *by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit* (r); and this is pleaded as an endearing Consideration, not only here, but elsewhere, *Keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace—there is one Spirit* (s). And it is indeed so. Hereby we become *Members one of another*, we are one Body, as animated by one Spirit. It is also the Gift of Christ as our common Head, and given that it may adorn us, and by so adorning may unite us; as indeed what can render the Soul more amiable than to be animated, to be impregnated with this Spirit, whose Fruits are so celestial and divine? Hear how the Apostle, in whom it so eminently reigned represents its Effects, *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance* (u); and surely these Fruits, fair as they appear when considered in themselves, must render those who possess them so much the more amiable, when considered as proceeding from this sacred Principle: For thus they render the Persons who possess them venerable; and we the more easily love where we greatly esteem. Does not

(r) 1 Cor. xii. 13.
(t) Gal. v. 22, 23.

(s) Eph. iv. 3, 4.

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Does not the holy Spirit himself disdain to descend and dwell in such Souls, and there to plant these noble and glorious Fruits, and shall I disdain them? Shall all the rich Treasure that he has lodged there, go for nothing with me, because he has not added this or that Circumstance? Because he has not taught them to judge exactly with me, and inclined them to worship with me? Surely to argue thus would be to grieve and affront this Spirit of Goodness. And let us not think to secure ourselves by saying they have it not. On men apparently sensual, cruel, and wicked, we may indeed pass this censure; whatever their religious Profession may be: But where Appearances are fair, we should be cautious of drawing such a Conclusion; should rather be ready to suspect ourselves, and say "have I indeed the Spirit of God, "the Spirit of Wisdom, of Candour, of "Love, when I thus judge *my Brethren*, "when in *honour I prefer myself to them* (x)? "When I say let me take the Mote out of "thine Eye, and consider not the Beam that is "mine own (y)?" Let us not thus grieve the holy Spirit of God, if we desire to preserve any Hope of being sealed by it to the Day of Redemption (z). The Sense and the Force of this Argument is apparent; though it may perhaps be a little difficult precisely to fix that
of

(x) Rom. xiv. 10. xii. 10.

(y) Matt. vii. 3.

(z) Eph. iv. 30.

stated, illustrated and urged, &c. 23

of the next, to which we must now proceed,

4. He pleads the Bowels of Mercies : For Bowels and Mercies are not to be understood as signifying different things, but, by an usual Hebraism, *Bowels of Mercy*, that is the tenderest Compassion, by which the Bowels are struck and caused to yearn : And the general Meaning to be sure is, if ye have learnt the Compassion of Christians. This implies, that it was intended that Christians should be compassionate. If there are Bowels in human Nature, how much more tenderly must they move, when instructed by the holy Discipline of the Gospel ? This the Genius of our Religion very evidently shows ; as it gives us so many Precepts of Compassion, and as it gives us so bright an Example of it, in him whose whole History is the History of Compassion and Love. And need I name *him* to you ? O Sirs, from whom can we learn this lesson if not from *Jesus* the Son of God, whose Pity, whose Pity for us, for our otherwise hopeless Ruin, brought him down from his exalted Glory, cloathed him in these mean Garments of mortal Flesh, which we wear, and when it had made him a Man, made him a Sacrifice too, and triumphed over all the Agony, and all the Infamy of the Cross, that it might raise us to Life and Glory ? O let us study this generous compassionate Love in its various Circumstances, till every stern
and

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and stubborn Passion be subdued in our Hearts, till we feel our Souls melted into Streams of Love, and disposed to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*; for greater Love has no Man than this, that a Man should lay down his Life for his Friend (a), and yet when we were Enemies Christ died for us (b).

BUT it is possible St. Paul might mean particularly to apply to their christian Compassion for him, as if he had said; "If on
" the whole you pity the Load of Affliction
" under which I am lying, for the Gospel,
" and would not grieve me yet more than
" all my Enemies can distress me; if you
" would rather comfort and support me under what I suffer from them, show it
" thus. Let Paul amidst all his Labours
" and Sorrows have this Joy, that you love
" one another; that you are ready to every
" kind and friendly Action, and shew a
" true Christian Magnanimity, as well as
" Gentleness of Mind, in looking higher
" than those things which are so often the
" Causes of Discord, to the great Consideration which have so strong a Tendency to
" unite us."

SUCH, my dear Brethren, and Friends, such are the Arguments which St. Paul urges, and let us endeavour to retain a Sense of them upon our Hearts. Let me, as it were, adjure as many of you as hear me this Day,
by

(a) John xv. 13.

(b) Rom. v. 8.

stated, illustrated and urged, &c. 25

by the Consolations of Christ, if they are sweet to you, by his Offices, by his Benefits, by all the Representations which the Scripture makes of him, by the endearing Tenderness and Delight of this most noble god-like Affection of the human Mind, by the Love of that holy Spirit which unites us into one Body, and is, as it were, the common Soul of it, by all the Compassions which as Christians you ought to feel for each other, and we the Ministers of Christ would add, (if that may avail any thing, as surely it may,) by all your Compassions to *us*, if we may indeed pretend to any Merit with you, for all that we do, or for all that we resign upon your Account, for all our most affectionate Care for your Edification, working frequently by Night as well as by Day, attending us into every Place, and every Service publick or private; an Affection which I hope, and I trust in the Lord, would bear us chearfully to Bonds and Imprisonments, or to Death itself for your Establishment in our common Faith. If any of these Considerations, if all of them united can have any weight, *be unanimous, having your Minds joined in the same Love, and attending to the one thing; thus fulfil ye our Joy*, which is herein the Joy of our common Lord too, and which will be your Joy, amidst the various Inconveniencies inseparable from mortal Life. Cultivate more and more that lovely Principle, which having

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ennobled as well as delighted your Spirits, having rendered you the Ornament of Religion, and dear in the Eyes of Men, and of God, will prepare you for, and through the Grace of the Redeemer transmit you to, the Regions of everlasting Love, and will there continue for ever to delight and adorn you, when Faith and Hope shall cease, and all our present Causes of Contention shall be long forgot. But I would hope you feel the Force of these Motives, and begin to be impatient for those *Advices* for maintaining and promoting this blessed Temper, which I gave you reason

3dly, To expect at the Conclusion of this Discourse. And here as I intend rather to suggest some useful and comprehensive Hints, than to expatiate upon them, I shall not range them under distinct Heads, but offer them briefly as they rose in my Mind.

It will be one Step towards attaining this excellent Temper, “earnestly to desire to attain it.” And that we may, let us often reflect with ourselves how amiable and how excellent it is! What an Ornament, and indeed, with all its Meekness, and Tenderness, what a Defence to true Christianity! Let us accustom ourselves to think, so far as our best Information reaches, what the face of the Christian Church has in fact been, amidst all the mutual Animosities that have reigned, among its Members; and, on the
other

stated, illustrated and urged, &c. 27

other hand, let us try to imagine what it would have been, if that pacific, gentle, beneficent Temper which the Gospel recommends had constantly, had generally been prevalent, and every angry, turbulent, malignant Thought and Passion, had been brought into sweet Subjection to the Laws of Christ. But who can make the Computation, whether we consider its Aspect on present or on future Happiness? Who can calculate how widely Christianity would have been spread, while the admiring World had been charmed by so bright a Light, had been melted by so celestial a Flame? Who can imagine what Delights had sprung up in every Breast, and how they had been multiplied by Reflection from each? Above all, who can conceive how large a Colony the Regions of perfect Love and Blessedness would have received from the peopled Earth: A Colony increased by how many Thousands and Millions of those, who, filled with Rancour and Hatred, are now alas gone down to final Destruction, and feel an Hell of malignant Passions within, which will be Matter of everlasting Torment to themselves, and all their wretched Companions.

“LET us often think of the Meekness and
“Gentleness of Christ and of his Apostles,”
particularly of St. *Paul*, and render familiar
to our Minds the many candid Maxims, and
Principles, with which his Writings abound.

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Let us remember, as he has admonished us, *that the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost* (c). That as for some particular ritual Observances, though the Imposition of them must indeed be displeasing to God, yet the Practice or the Omission does not affect our Share in his Favour, if Conscience be not violated. *Neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse* (d). Let us remember the very same Principle, and that a very good one, indeed the very best of all Principles, the Desire of pleasing God, may, to Persons under different Apprehensions, produce a quite different Conduct. *He that regards a Day may regard it to the Lord, and as for him that regards not a Day, it may be out of a conscientious Regard to the Lord that he does not regard it* (e). When we are tempted to make our own Taste and Relish the Standard to which all our Brethren should bow, let us remember that *Christ pleased not himself*; and, when we are ready on the one hand *to judge our Brethren*, or on the other Hand *to despise them*, let us call up to our Assistance that awful Tribunal before which we are all in a little time to appear (f), that the account we have to give of ourselves to Christ may awe our Spirits, and restrain us from that Severity
on

(c) Rom. xiv. 17.

(d) 1 Cor. viii. 8.

(e) Rom. xiv. 6.

(f) Rom. xiv. 10, 12.

stated, illustrated and urged, &c. 29

on our Part, which might seem to challenge, a Severity on his, which the best of us could never be able to support under.

“ If unkind Thoughts against our Brethren arise in our Minds, let us suppress them,” for by being vented they gain Strength, and one Injury is apt to beget another. If therefore we are obliged, as we sometimes may be, to plead the Cause of Truth and of Liberty, though our Antagonists may possibly give us great personal Advantages against them, yet let us not be too ready to take or even to observe them, but let us rather shew a noble Superiority to injurious Usage, and learn to answer Confidence and Petulance, Censoriousness and Severity with Calmness and Gentleness, with Reasonings indeed as strong as possible, but with a resolute guard upon our Tempers; lest we become like those whom we blame, and condemn, in what is their Folly, and will upon the whole be the Disadvantage of their Cause; for whatever little turn it may for the present serve, it will of course recoil upon them at last, and the more strongly when it seems to do it by its own natural Spring, while we are too generous to urge it to the last Extremity.

“ LET those of us who appear under public Characters be very careful that we do not on any Occasion passionately inveigh against our Brethren, and especially
“ in

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“ in religious Assemblies.” Thus to abuse the sacred and important Moments, which we spend immediately in the divine Presence, thus to pervert the great Design of Christian Ordinances, and make them the Vehicle of such malignant Passions, is equally affronting to God, and pernicious to Men. It is calling the Sheep of Christ together to be poisoned under a Pretence of feeding them. Alas too inflammable are the Passions of Men in this degenerate State of Nature, and too many are the unavoidable Occasions of Offence. It is not necessary that the Ministers of Christ should abet their Fury, and if I may be indulged in the Expression, tear out some of the most important Leaves of the Book of God, to give Fire to the fatal Train.

It is always proper to be upon our Guard here, and “ it is never more necessary than “ when the Petulance and Bigotry of others “ has given the Example and begun the At- “ tack.” Nature will be roused on such Provocation, and is ready to spring forward, and enter into the Contention with a fierce Delight : But it will be our surest wisdom in all such Cases, to *leave it off before it be meddled with* (f), remembering our relation to Him *who endured the Contradiction of Sinners against himself* (g), and *being reviled,*
reviled

(f) Prov. xvii. 14.

(g) Heb. xii. 3.

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reviled not again (h), but in calm Silence
committed himself to Him that judgeth right-
eously.

Permit me to add, that " in proportion
" to the Degree in which God has distin-
" guished any from their Brethren by pecu-
" liar Abilities, or more eminent Services
" they should be so much the more careful
" to distinguish themselves by Meekness and
" Candour." As James expresses it, *whoso*
is a wise Man, and endowed with distinguish-
ing Knowledge among you, let him especially
illustrate his Meekness of Wisdom (i). The
lowest Understanding, the meanest Educa-
tion, the most contemptible Abilities, may
suffice to give hard Names, and to pronounce
severe Censures. A harsh *Anathema* may be
learnt by Heart, and furiously repeated by
one that could scarce read it, and, as was in
truth the Case in some antient Councils, may
be signed by those that cannot write their
Names. But true Catholicism of Temper is
a more liberal thing, it proceeds from more
enlarged Views, it argues a superior Great-
ness of Mind, and a riper Knowledge of
Men and Things. And the Man who is
blessed with such Advantages should be so
much the more solicitous, that he does not
on any Provocation add the Weight of his
Example to so bad a Cause as that of Un-
charitableness always is. He owes it to God
and

(h) 1 Pet. ii. 23.

(i) Jam. iii. 13.

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and to the World that such an Influence be employed to the happy Purposes of healing the Wounds of the Christian Church, and of conciliating the Affections of good and worthy Men towards each other, till their united Counsels can regulate its Disorders, and restore to it a Form more worthy of itself.

“ ALL these Precautions will be more easy
“ to us, in Proportion to the Degree in
“ which we labour with our own Hearts,
“ to subdue the inward Workings of Pride
“ and Vain-glory.” And for this Purpose let us often review the too voluminous History of our own Miscarriages in Conduct, and Mistakes in Judgment ; and it will make us less confident in ourselves, less severe and over-bearing in our Treatment or Censures of others. On the other Hand, let us look upon the Excellencies of our Brethren rather than their Defects, and, let it always be the Joy of our Hearts to dwell in our Thoughts upon what is beautiful, rather than what is exceptionable ; and to trace, especially in those whose Advantages for them may seem to have been inferior to our own, the Evidences of Wisdom, and Humanity, of Benevolence, and Piety. For this Purpose, it is much to be desired that Christians of different Sects, while this Diversity must subsist among us, should be ready as Providence gives them Opportunity to form Acquaintance with each other, and also that their
Reading

Reading should not be confined merely to Authors of their own Sentiments, which often feeds Bigotry, and shuts out Candour at its first Entrance. An enlarged Acquaintance will infallibly convince us that all Truth and Goodness is not confined to one Denomination of Christians, nor among the Patrons of any of those Opinions, for which we have been inclined most eagerly to contend. Now when we are persuaded of another, *that God has received him*, we shall be more cautious how we presume either to *judge or despise him* (k), and when we see Excellency in so many Respects superior to our own, we shall not exalt ourselves highly on the Advantage we enjoy in being, as we must indeed suppose we are, right, in that particular in which we are obliged to differ from Persons we so highly esteem. Perhaps said one of the greatest and most excellent Men our Country has ever produced, I mean Mr. *Howe* ; " Perhaps the reason why, in some disputable " Points, I have seen farther than some of " my Brethren, is, because their more elevated Minds have been employed on greater and nobler Objects, which has prevented " their looking so minutely into these particular Questions. (l) "

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By

(k) Rom. xiv. 3.

(l) N. B. I well remember this to be the Sentiment, but not having marked the particular Passage, I cannot be certain as to the Words.

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By such Means as these I hope something may be done towards mending the Appearance of things among us, and reconciling the Hearts of contending Christians to each other, especially if we do not insist too rigorously on the History of former Wrongs and Injuries; for which we have all too much reason to blush, nor unwarrantably charge *the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children*.

THERE is great Reason to hope that the Endeavour of every single Person in his Station to promote mutual Union and Love by Methods like these, will in some Degree be effectual; nor let us be discouraged, though it be not immediately successful, to the full Extent of our Wishes.

IT may too justly be said, with regard to the Evils with which we are to contend, in such a Case, *that the Fathers have eaten four Grapes, and the Childrens teeth are set on edge* (m). Too many have from their tenderest Years been taught to place a part of their Religion in the Severity with which they censure their Brethren, and a peccant Humour, so early wrought into the Constitution, will not easily be subdued by the most sovereign Medicines. That very Reflection, however, should teach us “to take
“ great Heed that we do not convey unkind
“ Prejudices into the Minds of the rising Generation,” but that Youth be educated
among

(m) Ezek. xviii. 2.

among us, in more open and generous Sentiments, that they be taught to reverence true Christianity wheresoever they see it, and to judge of it by Essentials rather than Circumstantials. Let this be our Care, and it is more than probable, that our Children may rejoice in the Shade and Fruit of these Trees of Righteousness, which our Hands have planted, and I hope it is not a vain Presage that it will be so: For blessed be God the present Season is mild and favourable to such an Attempt, and I am persuaded none living have seen a Crisis, which seemed more encouraging and inviting to these labours of Love.

BUT here, as in every other respect, *Neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth: But God, that giveth the Increase (n).* "Him therefore let us humbly and earnestly invoke, for the benign Influences of his "Holy Spirit;" whose great Office it is to heal and sweeten, to purify and elevate the Mind, and in every Sense, *to take away the stony, and to produce and cherish the tender Heart.* And oh may the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, the God and Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is the Author of Peace and Lover of Concord, hear the Prayers in which our Hearts would unite with all our Brethren: humbly interceding for the Prosperity of the universal Church;

(n) 1 Cor. iii. 7.

Church: "That it may be so guided and
 " governed by his good Spirit, that all who
 " profess and call themselves Christians, may
 " be led into the way of Truth, and hold
 " the Faith once delivered to the Saints in
 " Unity of Spirit, in the Bond of Peace,
 " and in Righteousness of Life, through
 " *Jefus Christ.*" Amen.

F I N I S.

